

Midstate Independent Living Choices



MILC RUN

Quarterly Newsletter | April - June 2024



A Note from the Executive Director:

Greetings!

I hope this message finds you well. I would like to share with you the sentiments expressed by numerous individuals who utilize our services— *Midstate Independent Living Choices (MILC) is widely regarded as Central & Northern Wisconsin's best-kept secret.*

We're on a mission to change this perception.

I am reaching out to you with a sincere request for your help in amplifying our presence and the comprehensive services we offer. I wholeheartedly encourage each reader to share this information far and wide—let's not just share it, let's SHOUT IT OUT! Kindly extend this message to your family, friends, colleagues, and anyone who would appreciate the invaluable support and services provided by MILC, many of which come at no cost.

Our overarching mission is to “Empower People Toward Independence,” and we diligently fulfill this mission through a multifaceted approach. Our core services encompass information and referrals pertaining to aging or disability-related matters, Independent Living Skills Training, Peer Support, Advocacy, and Transitional Services for individuals moving from nursing homes and other institutions back into the community. Recent additions include youth services facilitating the transition to postsecondary life and the introduction of youth support groups. In addition, we operate three Mental Health Recovery Centers, a Personal Care Program for respite or at-home personal care needs, and proudly function as an IRIS Consulting Agency, affording participants the autonomy to self-direct their care, steering clear of managed care organizations.

It is remarkable to contemplate that an organization operating from a modest strip mall in the serene town of Stevens Point could extend such comprehensive services across 11 Wisconsin counties. This realization, though currently a well-kept secret, deserves to be widely acknowledged.

I invite you to join me in raising our collective voice and disseminating this valuable information, ensuring that the transformative impact of MILC is embraced by a broader audience. In fact, I encourage you all to SHOUT IT OUT!

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to empowering lives through MILC.

- Don Wigington, Executive Director



IL Days Recap

We've been busy here at MILC! On February 13th, we joined the 7 other Independent Living Centers of Wisconsin for IL (Independent Living) Days in Madison. The first day consists of training, networking and education, and the second is spent at the Capitol, speaking with our senators and representatives on what matters most to our community.

We kicked off the event with an awards dinner, where we celebrated 30 years as the Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers (WCILC). We were honored to introduce the "Maureen Ryan Award for Excellency in Independent Living", which recognizes staff within the Wisconsin IL Network (WILN) who embody and demonstrate strong advocacy skills and have made an impact within WILN.

The next day was filled with training, where some of our staff had the opportunity to present. Madison Matijevich spoke on providing inclusive services for people in the disability and LGBTQ+ community. Karalyn Peterson shared insights on accessible walking paths and how we can advocate for improvements. Eric Riskus and folks from Access to Independence, demonstrated adaptive video games, and how we can create accessible setups.

On the last day we all visited the capitol building to meet with representatives and senators covering our service area. We advocated for an increase in base funding for Independent Living Centers, more efficient Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), and expressed gratitude for the passing of SB668, which allows people receiving SSDI to open an ABLE account (more details coming in a future newsletter!).

-Eric Riskus, Independent Living Department Director

Follow us on Social Media:



facebook.com/milcinc



instagram.com/midstateilc



TikTok: [@milcinc](https://tiktok.com/@milcinc)

Have a seat!

Last summer, the city of Stevens Point was awarded the AARP Community Challenge Grant. The Grant enabled the city to install 4 bus benches throughout the city, one of which is right by MILC. The others were installed at the following locations:

- Intersection of Main and Water Street
- John's Drive
- Morton Park

We are very happy to say that of the 3,600 applications that were submitted, the city was one of 311 grantees. This enables the city to make these bus stops more accessible and a more pleasant experience.

-Karalyn Peterson, Resource Coordinator



SUMMER TRANSITION COURSES

Designed for youth with disabilities to successfully transition into adulthood.

Fridays: June 7, 14, 21 & July 12, 19

McMillan Library, Wisconsin Rapids

Offering 2 Courses:

TREES (18+)
10:30 am - 12 pm

Help Yourself (14+)
1 pm - 2:30 pm



6 CLASSES
\$450

Register by 4/30 to save \$75!

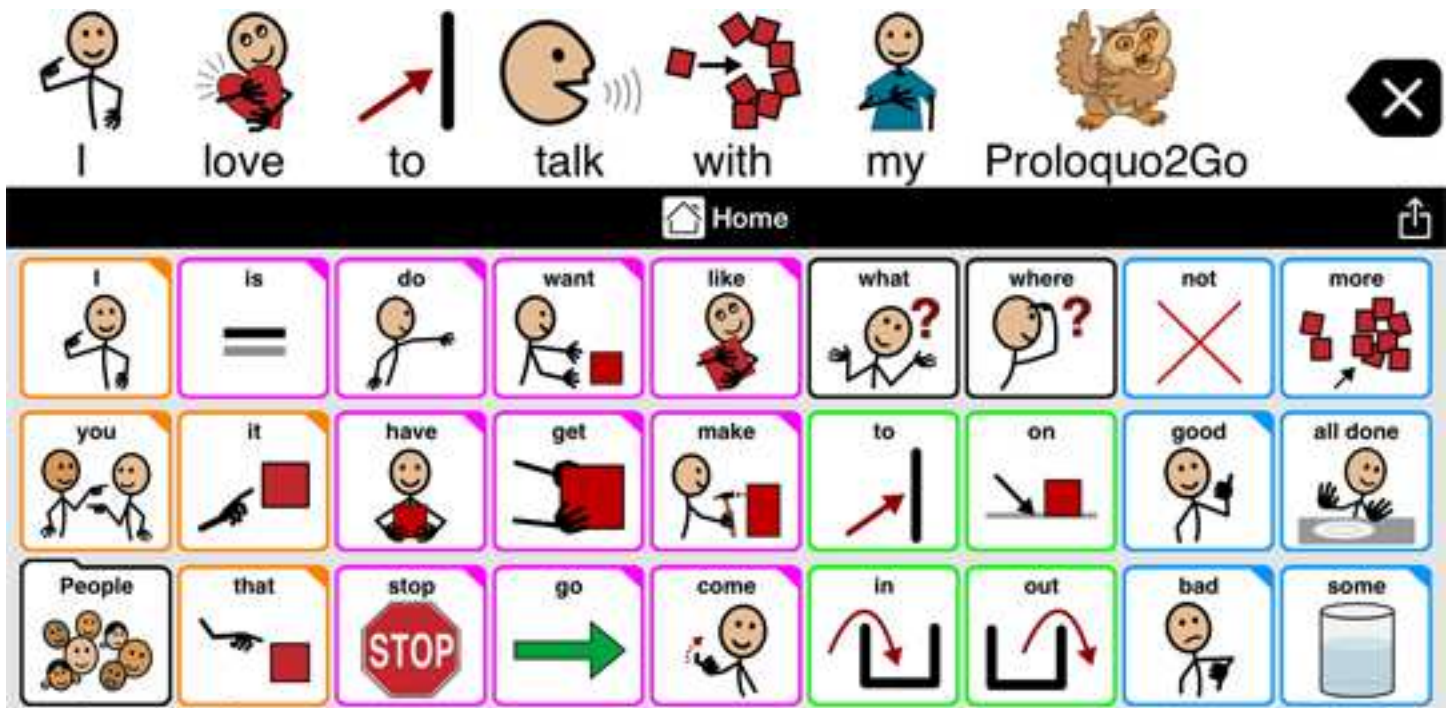
 715-303-7681

 mmatijevich@milc-inc.org

 milc-inc.org/summer24

Youth Peer Support

We're excited to introduce Youth Peer Support this summer! We are offering a 6-week series in Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids for youth with mental health and/or substance use challenges. To learn more and register, please contact Morgan Potter at mpotter@milc-inc.org, or call 715-344-4210 ext. 243.



MILC Contact Us

Visit our Website:
<https://milc-inc.org>

Call Us: 715-344-4210

Visit Us:
 3262 Church Street
 Stevens Point, WI 54481
 8:30am-5pm, Monday-
 Friday

**Join our Advocacy List
 (send an email to):**
kpeterston@milc-inc.org

**Variety of positions
 open throughout our
 service area. Visit:**
milc-inc.org/careers

Assistive Technology: AAC

There can be many reasons why someone cannot speak. Some common reasons we see are throat cancer, stroke, ALS, and non-verbal autism. Whatever the reason, lacking the ability to communicate is frustrating and limits independence.

Fortunately, there are many options to help people communicate. One option is Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Proloquo2Go is a paid AAC app for iPads and iPhones. This app allows users to set up a communication board that fits their needs. Users can use symbol-based icons to build sentences or a keyboard to type out what they want to say. This app also works with FaceTime and phone calls. To do this, the user would minimize the call to the background and open Proloquo2Go. When the user builds their sentence, the app speaks on the other end of the line to the person they are talking to.

MILC has an iPad with Proloquo2Go so individuals can see this in action, and see if an AAC app can help maintain independence with phone calls. Also, AAC apps are eligible for the TEPP program. If you are interested in learning more about TEPP, Proloquo2Go or other AAC apps/devices that may be able to assist, please contact us and ask to speak to an Independent Living Consultant.

-Alex Lena, Independent Living Department Manager

Alternatives to Guardianship

By Madison Matijevich, IL Consultant, Peer Specialist

More information available on <https://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/supporteddecision-making/>



What is Guardianship?

Guardianship is where a person (often a parent/guardian or family member) is legally appointed by a judge to make decisions for a person with a disability. These decisions can be where the person lives, what kind of medical care they receive, and even if they can get married and who they get married to. Guardianship is the most restrictive and limiting option for people with disabilities and can decrease their independence. When considering guardianship, it is important to consider how necessary it is, as it can be difficult to reverse later on.

What is Supported Decision-Making (SDM)?

Guardianship is not the only option for people with disabilities! Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is a less limiting alternative that allows people with disabilities to make choices about their own lives with support from a team of people they choose. SDM gives people with disabilities more autonomy over their own lives and helps their support team empower them to maintain more of their independence than traditional guardianship allows for.

How does the SDM process work?

A person with a disability identifies the areas where they need decision-making assistance such as healthcare, employment, relationships, finances, etc. as well as the type of support they need.

The person with a disability chooses supporters that they trust for their team. This could consist of family members, friends, professionals, etc.

The supporters commit to providing information to the person with the disability so that they can make their own decisions. Supporters commit to honoring and respecting the person's decisions.

The person with the disability and supporters completes a supported decision-making agreement (found on the WI Department of Health Services website: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/collection/f-02377>).

The SDM process promotes self-determination, consumer control, autonomy, and independence!



Loan Programs

WisLoan and Telework:

WisLoan is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with a disability, or their families, to purchase adaptive equipment, assistive technology or modify their homes so that they can live more independently. The applicant must be 18 and a resident of Wisconsin who wishes to improve his or her quality of life through the acquisition of items (examples include assistive technology, modified vehicles, etc.).

Telework is a statewide, alternative loan program allowing Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase equipment needed to start their own business. The loan cannot be used for salary or inventory, rather, it can be used to purchase things like technology, telecommunication equipment, or equipment needed to perform the job. In addition to the purchase of equipment, the loan funds can be used for training in using equipment, extended warranties, the cost of maintenance and repair.

Loan amounts depend on the item, and ability to repay. The current interest rate is 4%. Don't let things like bad credit or bankruptcy keep you from applying. The focus is on the ability to make monthly payments. The circumstances for credit issues are taken into consideration by the review board.

Contact MILC and ask to speak to the Independent Living (IL) Department for assistance in completing an application.

Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP):

If you are one of the millions of people who have difficulty using a telephone, you should know that help is available through the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP). TEPP provides funding through the Universal Service Fund (USF) for people with disabilities to help offset the cost of specialized telephones and related equipment on the eligible equipment list. To learn more about TEPP, visit our assistive technology page at <https://milc-inc.org/AT/> and scroll down to the TEPP section.



Staff Spotlight:

PAS Department



Barb Haggan, RN, Director of In-Home Services

Phone: 715-344-4210 x224 Email: bhaggan@milc-inc.org

Hello everyone; I appreciate this opportunity to introduce myself! Almost 30 years ago, while raising 3 very little girls, I graduated from college as a Registered Nurse. I worked for 7 years at a Nursing Home/Medical Rehab Center, during which I attended school again and obtained my RN Certificate in Psychology. I then worked for 5 years in Skilled Nursing Home Care, covering 27 counties. During this time, I also held a second job as a Consultant Nurse for a CBRF for over a year. After leaving Home Care, I came to MILC as an RN Case Manager in 2007. In 2015, I was offered and accepted the position of Director of In-Home Services, managing the Personal Assistive Services (PAS) Department. In my time in this position, I have had the opportunity to supervise 4 RN's and multiple support staff.

In my personal life, I was born and raised and still live in Wausau. I am married to a wonderful man, only 7 years now, so we're still "newlyweds!" I have 3 grown daughters with families of their own, including 5 beautiful granddaughters! And my husband has a grown son who lives in Los Angeles! Fun Fact; I have a pretty good green thumb and have 100+ house plant babies who live with my husband and I!

I have been with MILC for 17 years as of June 2024. I love working here because we make a difference in people's lives every day! I am looking forward to making this my very last position of my career because it is so rewarding!

If you or someone you know has any in-home or community-based care needs, Barb is here to help in any way possible for individuals with disabilities in the 13 counties she serves! Reach her in our PAS Department via call, text, or email!

We're Hiring! Join our PAS Team

MILC is in search of caregivers interested in assisting individuals in their homes providing personal, supportive, and or respite care.



- Variety of shifts
- Positions available throughout our 11 county service area
- Travel allowance for eligible cases/employees
- Experience preferred, or willing to learn new skills

Visit <https://milc-inc.org/careers> to learn more.





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17TH ANNUAL
ADAPTED KAYAKING
JUNE 29, 2024
10 AM - 2 PM
NEPCO LAKE PARK
1410 Griffith Ave. Wisconsin Rapids

FREE EVENT - REGISTER TODAY
milc-inc.org/kayaking

A QR code is located at the bottom left of the poster, next to the registration information.

Partially Supported by Wistech,
Wisconsin's State Assistive Technology Program.